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Memorandum for Henry S. Rowen
Chairman, National Intelligence Council
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Chairman, Political-Military Advisory Panel
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Six members of the Panel met at Headquarters. The following summarizes the major observations which I believe emerged from our effort to examine work on Soviet policy toward the Middle East. Many of these points were shared with the DCI in discussion. I shall try to represent group sentiment, but must take responsibility alone for this report.

As you know, the Panel met in November for a tour d'horizon. [redacted] and I later had several meetings with analysts and NIOs to review topics and gather documents. The full panel then spent two days in informal, but intense, discussion with analysts.

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In the main, the Agency's analysts (we spoke with CIA personnel only) examine Soviet policy toward the Middle East and SW Asia country by country. We observed no comprehensive, integrated view of Soviet behavior. Most analysts seem to accept the view that Soviet behavior is opportunistic and largely ad hoc. Panel members differ as to their interpretation of Soviet Middle Eastern policy, but they tend to perceive a more coordinated and purposeful Soviet strategy at work. I personally would stress the Soviets' awareness of an historic opportunity to shift the global power balance by extending their influence in the region over the next few years. To add to these findings, I shall attempt to draft for the comment of other Panel members a short interpretation of Soviet policy towards the Middle East.

A number of factors are currently working to fundamentally reshape the structure of international politics in the region (again, a picture whose pieces were presented by insightful analysts...but not the whole). First, Mubarak will clearly seek to take Egypt back toward the center of the Arab fold. Second, Iran looks like it may actually win the war with Iraq, reemerging as a fearsome political and military actor in the Gulf. Third, the Soviets are making impressive strides in establishing political, economic, and military ties with Iran. Unless countered, all these trends promise a sharp attack on US influence in the region in the months ahead. One clear implication for policy is the need to consider once again US (or US-backed) initiatives toward Iran which, despite its pathological anti-Americanism, needs weapons and alternatives to Soviet dependence. Given his special role, the DCI might take the lead in making this point.

From a management perspective, the DCI has a number of problems in assessing Soviet policy toward the Middle East. The most important of these is a shortage of experienced analytical people. Apparently there is only one seasoned analyst looking at Soviet foreign policy toward the region as a whole. This and a shortage of external contract research money hampers the emergence of more sophisticated analysis. Nevertheless, I for one came away from our discussions with a renewed sense (I've felt it when working in and with the DDI in the past) that the better analysts are notably better than the

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products of their organizations, that they show insight and excitement which the written products tend to "level down."

The DDI and the community at large appear to suffer from a shortage of analysts experienced in interpreting data on Soviet land-combat forces and operations. Deficiencies in understanding the Soviet military threat to the Middle East (and other areas) and in coping with the warning problem are the result. For example, the tedious but vital task of examining the Soviet logistics posture toward the new theater to the south is inadequately attended to. Such data as may exist at NSA on the past history of Soviet military exercises in the region cannot be combed through to establish a base-line of information from which to gauge current levels of activity, and hence, current priorities for Soviet military training. The shortage of experienced military analysts would seem to be particularly dangerous with respect to the warning problem, where close reading of military operations "on the ground" tends to be so vital. There aren't enough seasoned people to process rapidly expanding data flows, to advance alternative interpretations, and to educate usually ignorant policy customers.

Most ground force (and tactical air) analysts in the community emerge from a combination of military service and on-the-job training. One of our briefers said it takes four to five years to produce a good one. Yet it seems almost certain that intense classroom training by experienced personnel would produce good journeymen in this area within six to twelve months. DIA should be stimulated to take the lead in establishing such a program.

The panel was told that Soviet military forces opposite the SW Asian theater, in Turkestan and the Transcaucasus, are not being modernized to the extent one might expect given the strategic importance of the region. This problem requires careful analysis. It could mean that the Soviets do not expect their military posture to play much of a role in their policy toward the region. Alternatively they may believe that their older equipment still leaves them greatly superior to the forces they are likely to face in the region, or that any real contest with the US in the area will quickly escalate into NATO-Pact combat, toward which Soviet force modernization priorities continue to be directed. A fourth possibility is that Soviet modernization of forces directed southward may become more visible at any time; C³ adjustments have had priority up till now.

The Panel devoted considerable time to examining analysis of internal sources of instability in important countries of the region, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Our concern about inadequate understanding of deeper social forces was fully mirrored on the part of involved analysts. A key worry is that we understand social and political currents in friendly military establishments too poorly, despite our constant contact with them. Intelligence collection continues to suffer from a tendency of our local military representation (attaches and, especially, MAAGs) to slight intelligence roles in favor of other tasks. The DCI should seek redress from the Secretary of Defense.

The Panel touched briefly on the currently lively topic of Soviet MIG-23/27 shipments to Cuba and what they may mean. Admittedly the key analysts were not on hand, but the Panel was again struck by the apparent lack of a fundamental political assessment. Those aircraft were not sent casually or

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unwittingly; the history of such shipments gives them explosive potential of which the Soviets are fully aware. The Panel tended toward the view that the Soviets must have acted either to reveal the Reagan Administration incapable of effective counteraction in our backyard, or to provoke belligerent US behavior that would estrange and frighten allies around the Soviet periphery where the US is far weaker. Increasing indications that the Administration is going to "do something" about its Cuban-Caribbean-Central-American problem make the preparation of a thorough assessment of Soviet motives and perceptions an urgent requirement.

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